



MUMBAI

George Washington Served His Nation as a Military and Civilian Leader

Americans have long honored George Washington, commander of the United States armies in the War of Independence, first President of the United States and "first in the hearts of his countrymen."

Washington enjoyed nearly universal respect, not least for spurning all offers of political power at the moment of his military triumph (1781), choosing instead to return to his Mount Vernon, Virginia farm. When leading Americans in 1787 drafted new Constitution, they were willing to afford the Executive Branch greater powers because they anticipated that Washington, who could be counted on not to abuse his office, would serve as the chief executive, and would establish important precedents for his successors. Still the most popular figure in America at the end of his second four-year term, Washington again decided to relinquish power, establishing an informal eight-year limit later formalized by the 22nd Amendment to the Constitution (1951).

It has been said that the American people themselves forced Congress to establish the Washington's Birthday holiday, which today is fixed by law on the third Monday of February. 19th century Americans commonly celebrated a holiday on February 22, the day of Washington's birth under the Gregorian calendar adopted by Britain and its colonies in 1752. Apparently motivated by chronic employee absenteeism on that date, Congress in 1879 declared Washington's Birthday a legal public holiday.

In 1971, Congress fixed Washington's Birthday and a number of other holidays on Mondays, to create long holiday weekends. Because a number of states (but not the federal government) also celebrated the February 12 birthday of Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President, many Americans have come to believe – incorrectly – that the third Monday of February is a consolidated "Presidents' Day," and many merchants now offer Presidents' Day sales.

The federal holiday, however, remains Washington's Birthday. It is but one way in which Americans celebrate the life of the man often called the "father of his country." The 555-foot (169 meter) high Washington Monument, dedicated in 1885, dominates the skyline of the nation's capital, Washington, D.C. Washington's 60-foot (18 meter) high likeness was carved in stone (completed in 1941) on South Dakota's Mount Rushmore, along with those of Presidents

Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt. In 1976, Congress posthumously promoted Washington to the rank of six-star General of the Armies, assuring that he would continue to outrank all other members of the military, now and in the future.

George Washington's presidential residence was in Philadelphia, but he was active in creating a permanent place for future presidents to live and work. In 1790, he signed an Act of Congress declaring that the federal government would reside in a district "not exceeding ten miles square ... on the river Potomac." Together with city planner Pierre L'Enfant, Washington chose the site for the new presidential residence, now 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

It has been over 200 years since second president John Adams and his wife Abigail Adams moved into the incomplete Executive Mansion in the incomplete District of Columbia. Since then, 40 more presidents have lived in the building we now call the White House in the city we know as Washington, D.C. Most were married, some were widowed, and three were married while in office – although only Grover Cleveland married at the White House. A steady stream of presidential children and grandchildren have been born and raised there; a number have been married there; and a few have even died in the place American presidents call home.

White House: A Symbol of the Presidency

For two hundred years, the White House has stood as a symbol of the Presidency, the United States Government, and the American people. Its history, and the history of the nation's capital, began when President George Washington signed an Act of Congress in December of 1790 declaring that the federal government would reside in a district "not exceeding ten miles square ... on the river Potomac." President Washington, together with city planner Pierre L'Enfant, chose the site for the new residence, which is now 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. As preparations began for the new federal city, a competition was held to find a builder of the "President's House." Nine proposals were submitted, and Irish-born architect James Hoban won a gold medal for his practical and handsome design.

Construction began when the first cornerstone was laid in October of 1792. Although President Washington oversaw the construction of the house, he never lived in it. It was not until 1800, when the

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(Monday through Friday)

HOLIDAYS

February 16: Mahashivratri

February 19: Presidents' Day

A WORD FROM THE CENTER

As United States citizens prepare to celebrate Presidents' Day, in many American schools, the days leading up to the holiday are often used to educate students on the history of the Presidents of the United States, especially Washington and Lincoln. The importance of teaching children our history so that they can appreciate the freedoms we have been given cannot be overstated. These freedoms have been paid for at great cost and have now been entrusted to us.

For India as well as the United States, it is important to remember the leaders of our countries and remember those who are an embodiment of many of our most celebrated ideals. These leaders have left legacies of strong longstanding democracies with shared values of human freedom, democracy and rule of law.



Kristina M. Dunne
Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer

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White House was nearly completed, that its first residents, President John Adams and his wife, Abigail, moved in. Since that time, each President has made his own changes and additions. The White House is, after all, the President's private home. It is also the only private residence of a head of state that is open to the public, free of charge.

The White House has a unique and fascinating history. It survived a fire at the hands of the British in 1814 (during the war of 1812) and another fire in the West Wing in 1929, while Herbert Hoover was President. Throughout much of Harry S. Truman's presidency, the interior of the house, with the exception of the third floor, was completely gutted and renovated while the Trumans lived at Blair House, right across Pennsylvania Avenue. Nonetheless, the exterior stone walls are those first put in place when the White House was constructed two centuries ago.

Presidents can express their individual style in how they decorate some parts of the house and in how they receive the public during their stay. Thomas Jefferson held the first inaugural open house in 1805. Many of those who attended the swearing-in ceremony at the U.S. Capitol simply followed him home, where he greeted them in the Blue Room. President Jefferson also opened the house for public tours, and it has remained open, except during wartime, ever since. In addition, he welcomed visitors to annual receptions on New Year's Day and on the Fourth of July. In 1829, a horde of 20,000 Inaugural callers forced President Andrew Jackson to flee to the safety of a hotel while, on the lawn, aides filled washtubs with orange juice and whiskey to lure the mob out of the mud-tracked White House.

After Abraham Lincoln's presidency, inaugural crowds became far too large for the White House to accommodate them comfortably. However, not until Grover Cleveland's first presidency did this unsafe practice change. He held a presidential review of the troops from a flag-draped grandstand built in front of the White House. This procession evolved into the official inaugural parade we know today. Receptions on New Year's Day and the Fourth of July continued to be held until the early 1930s.

Fascinating Facts

The White House as Symbol and Home

Millard Fillmore (1850-1853)

Had the first kitchen stove installed in the White House; his wife Abigail established the White House library

Rutherford B. Hayes (1877-1881)

Had the first phone installed in the White House, in 1879

Chester A. Arthur (1881-1885)

Had the first elevator installed in the White House, in 1882

Benjamin Harrison (1889-1893)

Had the first electric lights installed in the White House, in 1891

William H. Taft (1909-1913)

Had the first cars at the White House, starting in 1909

Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953-1961)

Had the first putting green installed on the White House lawn, in 1953

Life in the Oval Office

On an early October morning in 1909, President William Howard Taft became the first President to walk into the Oval Office. Greeting the 27th President of the United States were silk velvet curtains and a checkerboard floor made of mahajua wood from the Philippines. Caribou hide tacked with brass studs covered the chairs in the room. President Taft chose the olive green color scheme.

The Oval Office was different from the office of President Theodore Roosevelt, who built the West Wing in 1902. Roosevelt's office was rectangular. Taft relocated the office and changed its shape to oval, like the Blue Room in the White House.

Preferences for oval rooms date to the time of George Washington. At the president's home in Philadelphia, Washington had two rooms modified with a bowed-end in each that were used for hosting formal receptions called levees. As his guests formed a circle around him, Washington would stand in the center to greet them. With no one standing at the head or foot of the room, everyone was an equal distance from the president. The circle became a symbol of democracy, and Washington likely envisioned the oval Blue Room as the ideal place to host a levee.

For President Taft, the Oval Office may have symbolized his view of the modern-day president. Taft intended to be the center of his administration, and by creating the Oval Office in the center of the West Wing, he was more involved with the day-to-day operations of his presidency than were his recent predecessors.

What President Taft could not imagine in 1909 when he built the Oval Office was that the office itself would become a symbol of the Presidency. Over the years, Americans developed a sentimental attachment to the

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Oval Office through memorable images, such as John Kennedy, Jr. peering through the front panel of his father's desk, or President Nixon talking on the phone with astronauts after a successful voyage. Television broadcasts, such as President Reagan's speech following the *Challenger* explosion, would leave lasting impressions in the minds of Americans of both the office and its occupants.

The Oval Office became a symbol of strength and reassurance the evening of September 11, 2001, when President George W. Bush delivered comforting words through a televised address from the Oval Office. Less than six months later, President George W. Bush welcomed Afghan Interim Authority Hamid Karzai to the Oval Office. The meeting was a sign of significant progress in the war on terrorism.

Tears of Joy and Laughter: Family Life at the White House

Tears of joy could be heard throughout the White House on September 9, 1893 after bright-eyed Esther Cleveland entered the world. Her mother, Frances, gave birth to her in the Clevelands' bedroom in the northwest area of the second floor. Esther, President Grover Cleveland's second daughter, was the first and only child of a president to be born in the White House.

The White House has served as the home for the President and his family since November 1800 when President John and Abigail Adams became the mansion's first residents. Over the years, the White House has been the site of many family gatherings, including birthday parties and holiday dinners. Families have also cried tears of joy at weddings and shed tears of sorrow at the loss of loved ones.

Dwight and Mamie Eisenhower's grandson, David Eisenhower, celebrated his eighth birthday in 1956 at the White House with a western party based on television personality and cowboy, Roy Rogers. Not only was Roy Rogers the theme of the party, but he and his wife, Dale Evans, also attended as special guests.

Several years earlier, in 1941, Franklin Roosevelt and his family gathered to celebrate Christmas. President Roosevelt took great pleasure in watching his children and grandchildren open gifts. But the President was so busy leading the war effort that he did not have time to open his own gifts. A few weeks later, a housekeeper found the President's gifts in a closet – unopened.

Many weddings have taken place at the White House. When Grover Cleveland married Frances Folsom in 1886, he became the first and only President to marry in the White House. Many brides, including presidential daughters Nellie Grant, Alice Roosevelt and Lynda Johnson, have chosen the beautiful East Room for their nuptials.

Although the East Room has been the site of many happy occasions, it has also been a place where mourners have gathered. The Green Room housed the body of Abraham Lincoln's son, Willie, who died of an illness. The bodies of seven Presidents, including Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy, have lain in state in the East Room.

The size of a President's family has varied, and one family made a lasting impact on the White House grounds. President Theodore Roosevelt's six children so filled the home with joy and laughter that he ordered the construction of a temporary building to serve as office space for his staff. Today the building is called the West Wing.

Theodore Roosevelt also officially named this historic home the White House in 1901. This simple name has turned a residence into a symbol of democracy and the place that many presidents have called "the People's House."

NOTES FROM THE AMERICAN LIBRARY

A Select Webliography on the American Presidency

http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/presidency/2_frame.html
The American Presidency

<http://www.opensecrets.org/presidential/index.asp>
The Center for Responsive Politics

<http://www.thepresidency.org/>
Center for the Study of the Presidency

<http://www.fairvote.org/>
The Center for Voting and Democracy

<http://www.excelgov.org/>
The Council for Excellence in Government

<http://www.democrats.org/>
The Democratic Party

<http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/executive-orders/>
The National Archives – The Federal Register – Executive Orders

<http://www.leadership.opm.gov/>
U.S. Office of Personnel Management – The Federal Executive Institute and the Management Development Centers

<http://www.ipl.org/div/potus/>
The Internet Public Library – Presidents of the United States

<http://www.firstladies.org/index.htm>
National First Ladies' Library

<http://www.presidentialclassroom.org/>
Presidential Classroom

<http://www.archives.gov/presidential-libraries/>
The National Archives – Presidential Libraries

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/amerpres/>
Public Broadcasting Service – The American President

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/pubpapers/index.html>
Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States

<https://www.gop.com/>
Republican National Committee

<http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/politics/execbran.htm>
U.S. Department of State – infoUSA – Executive Branch

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/index.php>
University of California Santa Barbara – The American Presidency Project

<http://www.gpo.gov/nara/nara003.html>
Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents/>
The White House – The Presidents of the United States

Note: *Internet sites included in this listing, other than those of the U.S. Government, should not be construed as an endorsement of the views contained therein.*

MUMBAI MONDAYS

A Discussion on The Wildlife of Alaska led by John Dunne

Monday, February 12

American Center Auditorium

6:00 p.m.

Alaska's most pristine area is the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This 80,000 square-kilometer refuge in northeast Alaska is home to polar and grizzly bears, wolves, wolverines, Dall sheep, moose, muskoxen, caribou, and hundreds of bird species. There are no roads, no houses, and no trails. Though it is one of the most ecologically intact areas in the world, the issue of drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has been a debated topic for over 25 years. John Dunne spent the summer of 1999 hiking and photographing in the refuge. A former National Park Service biologist and park ranger, he will share photos and stories about this unique part of the U.S.

John Dunne joined the Foreign Service in January 2005 as a public diplomacy officer and is currently serving his second tour as a consular officer in Mumbai. His first tour was in Baghdad as a political officer with the Sunni Arab portfolio. Prior to joining the State Department, John worked as a high school English teacher in Samoa and as a biologist/firefighter with the National Park Service in Alaska and California. He also worked in National Geographic Television's Natural History Unit. John has a B.A. in English from Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia, a B.S. in Biology from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, and an M.A. in Journalism from the University of Missouri, Columbia.

FILMS THIS MONTH

DEMOCRATIC SYSTEMS AND PRACTICES

Friday, February 9 *JFK* (1991, color, 189 mins)

American Center Auditorium

2:30 and 6:30 p.m.

Friday, February 23 *All the President's Men* (1976, color, 138 mins)

American Center Auditorium

3:30 and 6:30 p.m.



Oliver Stone's controversial account of the Kennedy assassination and its aftermath stars Kevin Costner as New Orleans district attorney Jim Garrison, who charged a local businessman with involvement in a highly-placed conspiracy behind the president's death. Tommy Lee Jones, Joe Pesci, and Sissy Spacek costar.

Director Alan J. Pakula rendered Woodward and Bernstein's account of the unraveling of the Watergate scandal and created one of the most suspenseful political thrillers of the seventies. Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman are the resolute Washington Post reporters, with Jason Robards as gruff editor Ben Bradlee; Jane Alexander and Hal Holbrook costar.



Fascinating Facts

Life After The Presidency

Thomas Jefferson (1801-1809)

Established the University of Virginia, including designing the buildings, setting up the curriculum, and selecting the faculty

James Madison (1809-1817)

Helped found the American Colonization Society, which favored gradual abolition of slavery and the resettlement of slaves and free blacks in Africa

John Tyler (1841-1845)

Became a member of the Confederate House of Representatives

Calvin Coolidge (1923-1929)

Created a nationally syndicated column for the McClure newspaper chain, "Thinking Things Over with Calvin Coolidge"

Gerald R. Ford (1974-1977)

Established the AEI World Forum, where political problems and business policies are discussed at annual gatherings

Jimmy Carter (1977-1981)

Founded the nonprofit Carter Center at Emory University in Atlanta to promote peace and human rights worldwide

The American Center acknowledges the following websites used for the article in this issue

http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/presidents_day.html

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/facts.html>

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/life/ovaloffice.html>

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/life/familylife.html>

http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/presidency/2_frame.html

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Admission to all American Center programs, restricted to persons over 16, will be on a first-come, first-served basis. Please bring the envelope containing this issue of the bulletin for admission (maximum two persons). The auditorium doors will open 30 minutes before the start of the program.
